

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

USDEL JEC PARIS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

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TAGS: PFOR, XC, US

SUBJECT: MAY 16 INDOCHINA PRESS SUMMARY

1. ALL PAPERS FEATURE SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE UNANIMOUS VOTE ON EAGLETON AMENDMENT TO CUT OFF ALL FUNDS FOR BOMBING IN CAMBODIA AND LAOS. (STENNIS AND MCGEE ABSENT). SUN' S CORDDRY NOTES FRIEDHEIM REITERATED ADMIN WILL CONTINUE BOMBING BY CUTTING BACK ON OTHER MILITARY OPS; SAID TIME AT HAND WHEN DOD WILL HAVE DECIDE OPS TO CURTAIL IN ORDER SAVE MONEY FOR " PRIORITY" BOMBING. MATHIAS SAYS WH INABILITY BLOCK AMENDMENT MARKS / DRAMATIC CHANGE/ IN CONGRESS ATTITUDE.

2. POST' S RICH SAYS EAGLETON AMENDMENT ABSOLUTE BAR TO BOMBING, DESIGNED SEAL OFF ADMIN " ESCAPE HATCH" FOR USE OF FUNDS PREVIOUSLY COMMITTED. SAYS ACTION OF TRADITIONALLY " CONSERVATIVE" APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE REFLECTS " APPARENT DECISIVE TURN IN CONGRESSIONAL SENTIMENT." COTTON SAYS US NOW HAS ITS MEN BACK, IT' S NEW " BALL GAME" IN INDOCHINA, AND HE DOESN' T WANT TO " BACK OURSELVES INTO A NEW WAR OVER THERE." FONG SAYS " BOMBING IS MORE OR LESS USELESS" BECAUSE IT " CAN' T HOLD TERRITORY," AND HE WOULDN' T WANT SEE ANY MORE US AIRMEN TAKEN PRISONER. MCCLELLAN ALSO NOTES RISK OF NEW POWS AND SAYS THIS WAS DECISIVE IN HIS DECISION TO SUPPORT AMENDMENT. BROOKE SAYS WATERGATE MAY HAVE

HAD SOME INFLUENCE BUT MAIN FEAR IS NATION BEING DRAWN INTO NEW WAR SITUATION. NYDN' S STAN CARTER REPORTS EAGLETON SAID HIS AMENDMENT PROMPTED BY RICHARDSON' S ASSERTION LAST WEEK THAT OTHER FUNDS COULD BE FOUND TO CONTINUE BOMBING. ADMIN AIDES BELIEVE CONGRESSIONAL CUTOFF WOULD MAKE HAK' S PARIS TASK MORE DIFFICULT AND MIGHT REMOVE INCENTIVE FOR HANOI NEGOTIATE.

3. NYT' S FINNEY REPORTS MANSFIELD SAYS " AT LAST WE SEEM TO BE UNITED," AND YOUNG ASKS, " WHAT' S THE POINT OF GOING ON SUPPORTING A GOVERNMENT THAT SEEMS TO HAVE NO WILL TO FIGHT AND IS CORRUPT?" TOWER FAVORS FULL FLOOR DEBATE AFTER MEMORIAL DAY RECESS BECAUSE UNCLASSIFIED

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ADMIN DID NOT WANT TO SEE HAK STRIPPED OF ALL HIS PARIS BARGAINING CHIPS.

4. FANK REPULSES ATTACK 14 MILES SW OF PP AFTER ENEMY ROCKETS KILL 12 VILLAGERS. PP MILITARY SOURCES REPORT SLIGHT DECREASE IN US BOMBING. GEN. FERNANDEZ WARNS FANK AGAINST FURTHER TROOP DEMONSTRATIONS LIKE

MONDAY'S IN PP. IN TAM SELECTS 21- MAN CABINET THAT WOULD BRING OPPOSITION POLITICIANS INTO GOVERNMENT. GKR FREES 121 ETHNIC VIETNAMESE FOLLOWING PRISON TERMS OF UP TO FIVE YEARS AS POLITICAL PRISONERS. MOST HAD BEEN ARRESTED DURING WEEK FOLLOWING SIHANOUK'S OVERTHROW (PHINQ, CHITRIB, NYDN, WP, NYT).

5. ZABLOCKI SAYS ADMIN VN AID REQUEST SHOULD BE MORE SPECIFIC AND SUGGESTS PROPOSED \$632 MILLION RECONSTRUCTION AID FOR INDOCHINA SHOULD BE DELAYED UNTIL BETTER DEFINED. AID'S HANNAH COUNTERS THAT DELAY WOULD BE CATASTROPHIC, WOULD STOP FOOD FOR 600,000 REFUGEES IN AREA (WP).

6. ADDRESSING DIPLOMATS AT RECEPTION IN HIS HONOR, THANOM SAYS ALTHOUGH PRESENCE OF U. S. MILITARY INSTALLATIONS " HAS SERIOUS DISADVANTAGES," RTG WILL CONTINUE MAKE ITS FACILITIES AVAILABLE TO U. S. LONG AS THERE ARE VIOLATIONS OF INDOCHINA PEACE AGREEMENTS. CONTENTS " PRESENT PRECARIOUS SITUATION" IN CAMBODIA AND LAOS CONTINUES DIRECTLY TO AFFECT SECURITY IN THAILAND AND ENTIRE REGION (UPI, WP).

7. SAVILLE DAVIS (CSM), IN BANGKOK, REPORTS THAILAND IS " SLOWLY GROPING" TOWARD MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING WITH CHINA. SAYS LATEST SERIES OF PRC- THAI TALKS WAS INAUGURATED BY MARSHALL GREEN VISITING BANGKOK IN WAKE OF NIXON CHINA TRIP AND REPORTING PEKING HAD NOT RAISED QUESTION OF U. S. BASES IN THAILAND DURING TALKS WITH PRESIDENT AND HAK. THANAT THEN APPROACHED PEKING THROUGH FRENCH GOVERNMENT AND THERE WAS PRELIMINARY EXCHANGE OF VIEWS. PROCESS WAS INTERRUPTED BY THANAT'S REMOVAL.

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8. GLOBE (MAY 15) REITERATES THEME PRESIDENT'S EFFORTS TO PROP UP LON NOL WASTEFUL AND FUTILE. PRESIDENTIAL VETO OF BOMBING FUNDS CUTOFF, EVEN IF UPHELD, WOULD SIGNAL PRESIDENT'S CONTINUING INDIFFERENCE TO WILL OF CONGRESS. CITES HOPE IN SOME WASHINGTON QUARTERS THAT CAMBODIA PEACE MAY RESULT FROM HAK- THO CONFERENCE, FLOWING OUT OF HANOI'S AWARENESS OF NIXON'S DEMONSTRABLE UNPREDICTABILITY. GLOBE THINKS PEACE MORE LIKELY WERE HAK TO ATTEMPT SERIOUS NEGOTS WITH PRESIDENT BEFORE CHASING " DELUSIVE" GOALS ELSEWHERE.

9. EVANS/ NOVAK (WP), IN LON TIEN, SAY THAT AFTER FOUR " PRAISEWORTHY" YEARS IN LAOS, AMB. GODLEY MADE FAREWELL PLEDGE THAT US BOMBERS WOULD RESPOND TO

" FLAGRANT AND VIOLENT" COMMUNIST VIOLATIONS OF LAOS
C- F. BUT LAOS LEADERS WONDERED PRIVATELY HOW LONG
ESSENTIAL US SUPPORT WILL CONTINUE. SIMILAR DOUBTS
EXIST WITHIN EMBASSY. THERE IS FEAR THAT CONGRESS
MAY BEGIN DISENGAGEMENT BY ABRUPTLY STOPPING US PAYMENTS
TO OVER 15,000 " REGULAR ARMY TROOPS FROM THAILAND"
NECESSARY TO BOLSTER SHREDDED LAO FORCES. EVEN WITHIN
US EMBASSY, INFORMAL CONSIDERATION IS BEING GIVEN TO
REMOVING UNILATERALLY SOME THAI TROOPS AND CIA MILITARY
ADVISERS TO PROD NVA WITHDRAWAL. SOUVANNA PHOUMA
SAYS, " IT WILL NOT WORK." EVAN/ NOVAK THINK
ENDING US OPERATIONS IN LAOS WOULD BE IRONIC. UNLIKE
VN, MODEST US INVESTMENT HAS REAPED GREAT BENEFITS.
SOME 1200 US OFFICIALS, INCLUDING SEVERAL HUNDRED
MILITARY ADVISERS FROM CIA, HAVE HELPED KEEP NON-
COMMUNIST LAO GOVERNMENT AND TIED UP FOUR NVA DIVISIONS.
LAO OFFICIALS ALSO FEAR WHAT FOLLOWS TOUGH, DETERMINED
MAC GODLEY. UNJUSTIFIABLY, THEY SEE CHARGE DEAN AS
LESS COLD WARRIOR THAN GODLEY. BUT FEAR OF FUTURE
US POLICY TRANSCENDS DEAN' S INTENTIONS, ANYWAY. EVEN
INTELLIGENTLY HARD- NOSED WHITEHOUSE COULD BE
" OVERWHELMED BY WASHINGTON' S MAD RACE TO DISENGAGE."

10. CSM SEES POTENTIAL DANGERS IN CONGRESS LIMITING
EXECUTIVE FLEXIBILITY IN MILITARY MATTERS, ESPECIALLY
IN LAOS, WHERE ADMINISTRATION SEES NVA PRESENCE AS
REQUIRING US SUPPORT OF THAI MERCENARIES. AND THERE
MAY BE OTHER OCCASIONS WHERE PRESIDENT MIGHT NEED TO
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MOVE FAST. BUT WITH US TROOPS AND POWS OUT OF
INDOCHINA, HARD TO PLEAD SUCH URGENT NATIONAL INTEREST
THAT PRESIDENT COULD NOT TAKE TIME TO SEEK CONGRESSIONAL
APPROVAL FOR NEW OR CONTINUED BOMBING THERE. UNACCEPTABLE
FOR ADMIN TO THREATEN CONTINUE BOMB EVEN IF CONGRESS
CUTS OFF FUNDS.

11. LAT' S LESLIE (MAY 15), IN SAIGON,
COMMENTS THAT VIETNAMESE REACTIONS TO WATERGATE SEEM
TO REFLECT DOUBLE- EDGED NATURE OF US- VIET RELATIONS.
WHILE SOME ARE CONCERNED THAT WATERGATE MAY HAMPER
US ECON AND MILITARY AID, YET THEY SEEM TO TAKE ALMOST
GLEEFUL SATISFACTION IN DISTRESS OF THEIR RICH AND
POWERFUL BENEFACTORS. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, IN
PARTICULAR, SEEM TO ENJOY IRONY THAT FOR ONCE IT IS
AMERICANS WHO ARE ACCUSED OF CORRUPTION. TWO MAJOR
OPPOSITION PAPERS HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY BITING IN
WATERGATE COMMENTARIES. SINCE THEY ARE NOT PERMITTED
CRITICIZE THEIU DIRECTLY, THEY SEEM TO BE USING ATTACKS
ON NIXON AS INDIRECT SLURS AGAINST THIEU.

12. NYT' S RESTON, REFERRING TO CONGRESSIONAL ACTIONS,
COMMENTS THAT HAK WILL BE NEGOTIATING NVN ARTICLE 20
COMPLIANCE FROM POSITION OF WEAKNESS AND HAS VERY FEW
CARDS TO PLAY; IS NO LONGER ABLE TO THREATEN
RETALIATION OR PROMISE ECON AID. WHOLE POSITION OF
HIS GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN WEAKENED BY INTERNAL
CONFUSION AND CORRUPTION, AND HANOI NOT LIKELY BE
IN MOOD FOR ACCOMMODATION. IN THIS SITUATION, CONGRESS
COULD AT LEAST GIVE HAK FEW DAYS GRACE. HE HAS
ENOUGH TROUBLES THESE DAYS WITHOUT BEING HUMILIATED
ON CAPITOL HILL. RUSH

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